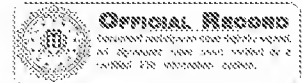


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Import Form

Form Type: OTHER - Other

Date: 07/16/2019

Title: (U) News article

Approved By: SSA [REDACTED]

Drafted By: [REDACTED]

Case ID #: [REDACTED]

80-LR-C2416080

(U) UNSUB(s);
Linda Collins Smith (deceased);
[REDACTED]

(U) NEWSPAPER ARTICLES;
LITTLE ROCK DIVISION

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Synopsis: (U) AR Democrat Gazette "Police detain woman in ex-legislator's death" 6/15/2019

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Arrest

• Continued from Page 1A

this case. We would like to thank everyone for the continued prayers and thoughts for our family during this difficult time."

Sadler said more information about the homicide — including Collins' cause of death — will not be released until the case is turned over to the 3rd Judicial Circuit prosecuting attorney's office.

He said the investigation is very "fluid" and he could not anticipate when charges would be announced against O'Donnell.

When asked whether the Arkansas State Police could clarify the relationship between O'Donnell and Collins, Sadler said none of the investigators are "prepared to say with certainty that there is a connection at all and that this was not a chance encounter."

As of 7:20 p.m. Friday, Sadler said O'Donnell had not yet been booked into a jail, and would not specify to which jail she would be transported.

Collins' visitation was Friday from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Sutton Free Will Baptist Church in Pocahontas, according to Fears Family Funeral Home's obituary. Her funeral will be today.

Collins served as a Republican senator for District 19, which includes Independence, Izard, Sharp and portions of Fulton and Randolph counties, from 2015 until this year. Before that, she served in the Arkansas House from

2011 to 2013.

The Randolph County sheriff's office requested the aid of the Arkansas State Police on June 4 after finding the body of 57-year-old Collins outside her home at 4023 W. Arkansas 90 in Pocahontas. Sheriff's deputies had responded to a call about a body there.

The state of decay had initially prevented investigators from making a positive identification of the body. The state Crime Laboratory later confirmed that the body was that of the former state senator.

Circuit Judge Harold Erwin signed a gag order on June 5, preventing the release of information, including law enforcement and medical reports. No more information was released until Friday.

The profile picture on a Facebook page under O'Donnell's name shows the suspect posing with Collins. The profile picture was updated on Monday, six days after Collins' body was found.

The man listed as O'Donnell's boyfriend on social media also posted a photo of himself, O'Donnell and Collins without a caption on June 5.

Posts from May 2018 show O'Donnell and others campaigning on the side of a road for Collins during her last re-election race.

Before her body was found, Collins had not posted on social media since May 28, which Collins' former campaign spokesman Ken Yang said on June 4 was strange for her, as she normally posted at least once daily.

According to Arkansas property records, the land where Collins was found is owned by Collins and her former husband, Philip Smith.

Philip Smith retired as a judge in the 3rd Judicial Circuit, which includes Randolph County, in 2017.

The couple separated in 2016 and filed for divorce the following year. The couple married in 1995 and have two adult children.

Police detain woman in ex-legislator's death

CLARA TURNAGE
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

A Pocahontas woman was arrested in connection with the death of former state Sen. Linda Collins, authorities said Friday night.

Rebecca Lynn O'Donnell, 48, of Pocahontas was in custody, though no charges had been filed late Friday evening. Criminal charges are pending, said Arkansas State Police spokesman Bill Sadler.

The family of Linda Collins released a statement late Friday about the arrest.

"This evening our family received news that an arrest



was made in connection to the ongoing investigation," the statement said. "We are sickened and upset that someone so close

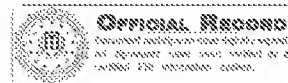
to Linda, would be involved in such a terrible, heartless crime.

"The family is very confident that the Randolph County Sheriff's Department and the Arkansas State Police will continue to work diligently to bring justice to

See **ARREST**, Page 3A

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Form Type: OTHER - Other

Date: 07/16/2019

Title: (U) News article

Approved By: SSA [REDACTED]

Drafted By: [REDACTED]

Case ID #: [REDACTED]

(U) UNSUB(s);

Linda Collins Smith (deceased);

80-LR-C2416080

[REDACTED]
(U) NEWSPAPER ARTICLES;
LITTLE ROCK DIVISION

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Synopsis: (U) AR Democrat Gazette "Suspect waits in jail; ex-senator laid to rest" on 6/16/2019

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UNCLASSIFIED

SUNDAY, JUNE 16, 2019

Suspect waits in jail; ex-senator laid to rest

Authorities releasing few details on slaying

CLARA TURNAGE
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

The woman arrested Friday in the slaying of former state Sen. Linda Collins is being held in the Lawrence County jail in Walnut Ridge, about 15 miles south of Poca-

hontas, Randolph County sheriff said. Rebecca O'Donnell, 48, was arrested Friday night, 10 days after deputies in Randolph County discovered Collins' body outside her home at 4023 W. Arkansas 90 in Poca-

hontas, according to Arkansas State Police spokesman Bill Sadler.

Randolph County Sheriff Kevin Bell confirmed Sat-

urday that McDonnell was being held in the Lawrence County jail in Walnut Ridge, about 15 miles south of Poca-

hontas. No charges were immediately filed against O'Donnell, and Sadler said prosecuting attorney Henry Boyce's office would make the decision.

"Obviously, the Arkansas State Police had sufficient legal cause to arrest and detain the suspect," Sadler said. "And now the prosecuting attorney will make a decision on when to publicly state what those charges will be and how he intends to pro-

ceed with the adjudication. He also will set the course for continuing the investigation for special agents of the Arkansas State Police."

Boyce did not return phone calls requesting comment Saturday.

Collins' funeral was held Saturday at Sutton Free Will Baptist Church in Poca-

hontas, according to an obituary from Pears Family Funeral Home.

Her family said in a statement Friday night, "We are sickened and upset that someone so close to Linda,

See **COLLINS** Page 7B

Collins

Continued from Page 1B
would be involved in such a terrible, heartless crime."

Posts on a Facebook page under O'Donnell's name show several photos of her and the former senator and images of O'Donnell and her boyfriend campaigning for Collins.

No initial court date for O'Donnell has been publicly released.

"Setting that date and time, that's a role of the court," Sadler said. "At some point the court and the prosecutor will make sure that we have state police personnel there. It may be in the form of highway patrol troopers



Collins

or other representatives." Collins served as a Republican senator for District 17, which includes Independence, Izard, Sharp and portions of Fulton and Randolph counties, from 2015 until this year. Before that, she was in the Arkansas House from 2011 to 2015.

She is said to have died in the house after a body was found on June 4 found Collins outside the residence, and the state of decay prevented her immediate identification. The state Crime Laboratory later confirmed

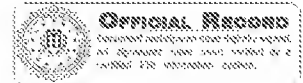
that the body was that of the former lawmaker.

A gag order signed by Circuit Judge Harold Erwin on June 5 prevents the release of further information. How Collins died and who called deputies to the scene have not yet been released.

According to Arkansas property records, the land where Collins was found is owned by Collins and her former husband, Philip Smith.

Philip Smith was a partner in the law firm of Collins and Smith, which includes Randolph County, until his retirement in 2017. The couple separated in 2016 and filed for divorce the following year. They were married in 1995 and have two children.

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Form Type: OTHER - Other

Date: 07/16/2019

Title: (U) News article

Approved By: SSA

Drafted By:

Case ID #:

80-LR-C2416080

(U) UNSUB(s);

Linda Collins Smith (deceased);

(U) NEWSPAPER ARTICLES;
LITTLE ROCK DIVISION

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Synopsis: (U) AR Democrat Gazette "Murder case filed in Collins slaying"
on 6/18/2019

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Murder case filed in Collins slaying

Ex-senator's campaign aide charged

JOHN MORITZ
AND YOUSSEF RDDAD
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE
POCAHONTAS — Prosecutors announced Monday morning that they had filed capital murder and other charges against a local woman in the death of former state Sen. Linda Collins, though details remain scant about the homicide in this

small town along the Black River.

Rebecca Lynn O'Donnell, 48, of Pocahontas was arrested Friday evening in the death of the ex-senator, according to authorities. An Arkansas State Police spokesman said at the time that no charges had been filed against her.

See **COLLINS**, Page 4A

Collins

• Continued from Page 1A

In addition to serving as a campaign aide to Collins during her unsuccessful re-election bid last year, O'Donnell was "considered a good friend" to the Republican lawmaker, said Ken Yang, a former spokesman for Collins.

Yang said that while he had not known O'Donnell well himself, he had not heard Collins mention any falling out in their relationship.

Prosecutors and police Monday continued to refuse to release any documents related to their investigation of Collins' death, citing a judicial order blocking such disclosures. That order was signed the day after Collins' body was found at her home on June 4. Authorities have not described a suspected motive for her death.

At her initial appearance at the Randolph County Courthouse on Monday morning, O'Donnell was charged with capital murder, abuse of a corpse and hindering physical evidence. No plea was entered during the initial appearance, which lasted about 15 minutes.

Circuit Judge Tom Garner ordered her held without bail at the request of prosecutors. Her plea and arraignment were scheduled for July 30.

O'Donnell was represented at her initial appearance by Gregg Parrish, the executive director of the Arkansas Public Defender Commission. Parrish, who said he met with O'Donnell over the weekend and again before court Monday, told Garner that a different public defender is likely to be appointed to represent O'Donnell.

During the brief court appearance, O'Donnell wore a striped black-and-gray jail uniform and a bullet-resistant vest. She did not make any statement

as she stood with her hands shackled together in front of her. At one point, she needed help from Parrish to place glasses on her face so that she could read court documents that had been prepared for her.

Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Joe Grider similarly said little in court, other than explaining that another judge in the 3rd Judicial Circuit, Harold Erwin, on Friday evening found there was probable cause to issue a warrant for O'Donnell's arrest.

A member of Collins' family said outside the courtroom Monday that her relatives planned to remain quiet. Yang tweeted later that all future statements from the family would come through him.

Tim Loggains, who is identified in O'Donnell's social media accounts as her boyfriend, sat in the front row of the courtroom Monday. Loggains, the leader of a group that advocates for the permitless carry of handguns, had appeared several times with Collins at the state Capitol this spring to argue for legislation on gun rights.

Loggains declined to comment when approached by a reporter after the hearing.

Prosecutors and police have yet to reveal how they believe Collins died. Her body was discovered outside her home "in an advanced state of decomposition," according to a news release issued Monday by Henry Boyce, the chief prosecuting attorney for the 3rd Judicial Circuit, which covers four counties in northeast Arkansas.

It took investigators at the medical examiner's office two days to identify the body using dental records, according to the release.

The release from the prosecutor's office also cautioned members of the media to remain "patient" during the investigation, saying that news related to former senator's death had already become "distorted."

"Public interest in this case immediately began generating news reports and social media activity which became a distraction to law enforcement within hours of the discovery of the body," the release stated.

As a senator from District 19, Collins represented Pocahontas, a city of about 6,600, and portions of five counties from January 2015 to this January. She had previously served a single term in the state House, having first been elected as a Democrat before switching parties.

Neighbors of Collins' home on Arkansas 90 said Collins moved into the home with her then-husband, then-Circuit Judge Philip Smith, years ago. Some neighbors said Collins was not close with many of the people living in the small cluster of homes around hers.

Collins and Smith separated in 2016, filing for divorce a year later. During her time in the Legislature, Collins went by the surname Collins-Smith.

Yang, Collins' former spokesman, said he was with the former lawmaker's friends and family for a visitation on Friday night at the Sutton Free Will Baptist Church when they received the news of O'Donnell's arrest. Collins' funeral was Saturday.

Kevin Barnett, the church's senior pastor, said O'Donnell was not a member of the church, to his knowledge.

Because the Randolph County jail does not have space to house female inmates, O'Donnell was held in neighboring Lawrence County over the weekend, according to Randolph County jail administrator J.C. Vandergriff.

The Lawrence County jail log, viewed Monday by a reporter, said O'Donnell had been held for Randolph County and didn't specify charges.

The jail log at the Randolph County jail, also viewed Mon-

day by a reporter, indicated that O'Donnell was booked around 5:22 p.m. Friday on capital murder and the other charges. However, the entry was listed after several other arrests that were written down over the course of the weekend.

A Randolph County jailer said he was not sure where O'Donnell was taken after her court appearance Monday. She was not returned to the Lawrence County jail, according to a deputy there.

"They have 60 days from her being taken into custody to file charges in circuit court," Pulaski County prosecutor Larry Jegley said when asked by a reporter to explain the procedure for charging a defendant.

Erwin is the judge who signed off on the order blocking the release of major material in the investigation, including law enforcement and medical reports.

Grider had cited "prejudicial pretrial publicity" in his request seeking those records be made private. He argued it would hinder the court's ability to find a fair jury.

Jegley said it's not uncommon for prosecutors and defense attorneys to seek an order restricting the release of information.

"It's to preserve the integrity of the testimony and so the defense can get a good, fair hearing," he said.

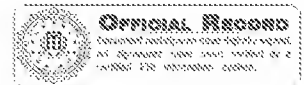
Bill James, a defense attorney, said defense attorneys can still review those documents but aren't allowed to publicly release information.

"There's no opportunity to put any kind of spin," James said. "But it's more political than necessary for justice."

But both agreed such orders present challenges for both prosecutors and defense attorneys when inaccurate information surfaces and they can't refute it outside of court.

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Import Form

Form Type: OTHER - Other

Date: 08/06/2019

Title: (U) Newspaper Article

Approved By: SSA [REDACTED]

Drafted By: [REDACTED]

Case ID #: [REDACTED]

(U) UNSUB(s);

Linda Collins Smith (deceased);

80-LR-C2416080

[REDACTED]

(U) NEWSPAPER ARTICLES;
LITTLE ROCK DIVISION

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Synopsis: (U) Arkansas Democrat Gazette, 7/31/2019 "1st Collins killing details out"

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1st Collins killing details out

Video said to show suspect at scene

JOHN MORITZ

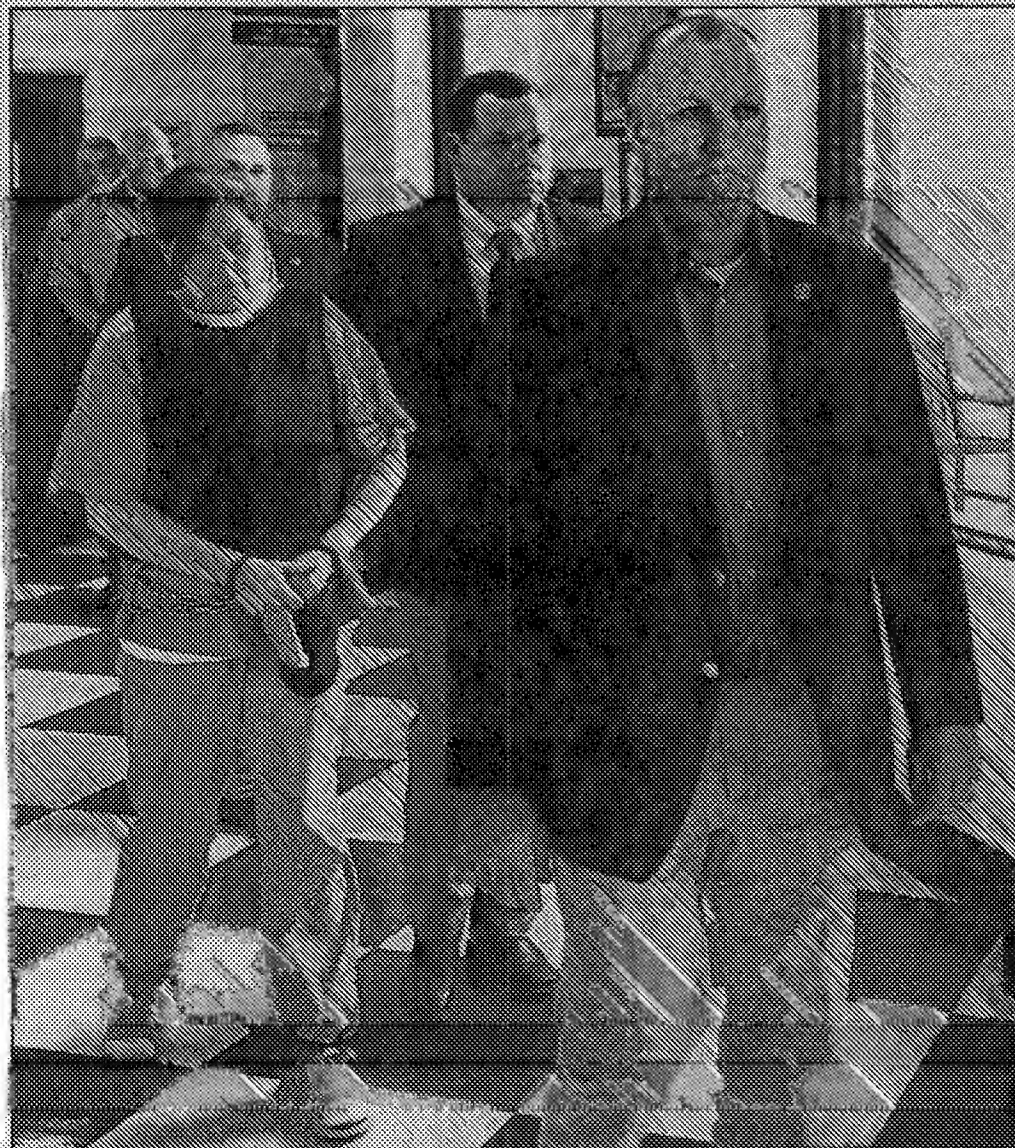
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

POCAHONTAS — Six days before the slain body of former state Sen. Linda Collins was discovered in her driveway in June, video from inside the lawmaker's home recorded her friend and former campaign aide removing security cameras, according to an affidavit released Tuesday by a judge.

The friend, Rebecca O'Donnell, will face the possibility of a death sentence if her capital-murder case goes to trial, prosecutors said Tuesday.

For the first time since O'Donnell's arrest on June 14, officials were cleared by a judge to release some court records that reveal what led police to arrest the 48-year-old suspect less than two weeks after Collins' body was found with multiple stab wounds. Prosecuting Attorney Henry Boyce also gave public answers to press questions for the first time since filing the case against O'Donnell.

See **SLAYING**, Page 4A



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/JOHN MORITZ

Rebecca O'Donnell is escorted out of a courtroom Tuesday at the Randolph County Courthouse in Pocahontas after she was arraigned in the slaying of former state Sen. Linda Collins.

Slaying

• Continued from Page 1A

At her second appearance at the Randolph County Courthouse, O'Donnell pleaded innocent to one count each of capital murder, abuse of a corpse and tampering with physical evidence. She continues to be held with no bail at the Jackson County Jail, which has facilities for up to 100 inmates.

According to the affidavit, Collins was last seen alive May 22. Tuesday, O'Donnell was shown inside the former lawmaker's home recording security cameras. The document stated:

Less than a week later, on June 4, Collins' son, Butch Smith, and her father, Benny Collins, went to her home on Arkansas 90 in Pocahontas after not hearing from Collins for several days. In the driveway of the house, they found Collins' body wrapped in a planker and covered by a tarp.

While the body was in an "advanced state of decomposition," the state Crime Laboratory was able to "confirm the identity and determine that Collins had died as a result of stab wounds. Investigators also determined that Collins' body had been moved from inside the house to the driveway."

Later, on June 14, police obtained the footage from inside Collins' home, according to the affidavit. O'Donnell

was arrested that evening while on her way to Collins' visitation service.

The affidavit makes no reference to a possible motive or a murder weapon.

Retired Circuit Judge David Goodson, assigned by Arkansas Chief Justice Dan Kemp to hear the case, ordered a redacted version of the affidavit released to the public Tuesday. Additional details about the video footage were obscured by redaction.

Before Tuesday, the state sealing all records related to the murder investigation had been put in place by another circuit judge, who also redacted, along with all the other judges on the 3rd Judicial Circuit. Collins' ex-husband, Philip Smith, is a retired judge on that circuit. Goodson once served in the neighboring 2nd Judicial Circuit.

Media outlets, including the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, had written to Goodson asking that he remove the order to seal in light of unsubstantiated rumors and innuendo about the case that had circulated prior to the start of Tuesday's arraignment. Goodson addressed those concerns, reading at times from what appeared to be prepared remarks.

"This is not a sporting event," Goodson said, cautioning the packed courthouse and the press to respect the proceedings and refrain

from emotional outbursts. "This is not a TV show. This is not a circus. This is not a law."

Still, Goodson agreed to lift the previous order and allow for the release of the redacted affidavit, criminal information, pleadings and other motions related to the case. Investigative documents that give information beyond



Collins

what is included in the affidavit will remain under seal, according to Goodson's order.

Prosecutors, the defense team and other law enforcement entities also were ordered by Goodson to refrain from "extrajudicial statements." O'Donnell's attorneys had requested such a gag on outside statements in one of a series of motions made before Tuesday's arraignment. Other motions by the defense team included requests that prosecutors share any digital records from the investigation, as well as any probation or parole records from the Arkansas Division of Community Correction.

Dina Tyler, a spokeswoman for the Community Correction Division, said records show that O'Donnell was on probation in Randolph County from

2010 to 2013 for a theft case. O'Donnell also was ordered to pay \$2,621 in restitution for a 2004 theft from Tyler, she said.

Lee Short, one of O'Donnell's attorneys, declined to comment further on his client's case, citing Goodson's gag order.

Butt Short, the defense attorney, and Boyce, the lead prosecutor, said their first experience trying death penalty cases.

While none of the men in the row of Arkansas' death row are from the last county, Judge David Goodson said he has tried several capital cases, including one that resulted in a death sentence that was later overturned. There are no women condemned to death in Arkansas.

Short, who was appointed by the Arkansas public defender system to handle the capital case, served as an appellate attorney for Ledell Lee, who in 2017 became the first person executed in Arkansas in more than a decade.

When asked why he was seeking the death penalty against O'Donnell, Boyce replied, "It's an option," and declined to elaborate.

O'Donnell appeared in the courtroom Tuesday wearing an orange jail jumpsuit, with glasses that she needs for reading perched on top of her head.

She stood between Short and her other attorney, Kath-

erine Street, where Linda by Goodson if she had been. Each of the three charges against her. Each time, she answered a simple, "Yes."

Also in the courtroom Tuesday was O'Donnell's fiancé, Tim Loggains, who had defended O'Donnell last month in a nationally televised interview with ABC's *Good Morning America*, saying "she's not capable of this."

"Either she is the best actress in the world and completely fooled me, or there's not a chance she did this," Loggains said in the ABC interview. He continued to decline to answer questions from other media outlets outside the courtroom Tuesday.

Loggains was in the car with O'Donnell when she was taken into custody. An outspoken activist for gun rights, he had appeared at the state Capitol in Little Rock on several occasions to advocate for legislation along

with Collins. Last July, Collins' divorce from Smith. Collins had granted Loggains her power of attorney. In the ABC interview, he attributed the event to helping out a friend who was in need.

"None of the information being selectively leaked shakes my confidence in Becky," Robin Emis of Heber Springs, Collins' divorce attorney, said in a statement released Tuesday night. Becky and Tim were Linda's advocates, protectors, and trusted confidants. They both loved Linda and tirelessly gave their time and energy to support her, in every way. This attack on Becky is a re-victimization of Linda. I'm grieved for everyone involved."

Collins' immediate family was escorted into and out of the courtroom Tuesday through a back door. A spokesman later said the family declined to comment on Tuesday's proceedings.